

Local residents seek information about protecting Mill Creek watershed

[kcchronicle.com/2018/09/28/local-residents-seek-information-about-protecting-mill-creek-watershed/aj4xtzl](https://www.kcchronicle.com/2018/09/28/local-residents-seek-information-about-protecting-mill-creek-watershed/aj4xtzl)

KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE

'We have the ability to make a difference'

By BRENDA SCHORY [Email](#) [Follow](#)

Oct. 2, 2018



GENEVA – Maggie Soliz of Batavia was among the 40 people who attended an open house Sept. 27 to learn about a plan for protecting the Mill Creek watershed, 31 square miles of the land around the creek that drains into it.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning hosted the open house at Peck Farm Park in Geneva in collaboration with the Kane County Division of Environmental and Water Resources, the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership, the Fox River study group and local municipalities and districts to create a water-quality-based protection plan for Mill Creek.

"As neighbors living in the watershed, we have the ability to make a difference in what we do with our own individual properties," Soliz said. "Are we putting chemicals on those properties? Are we planting invasive plants, or are we planting native plants? Just individually, we have an effect on it. But as a whole, we have a responsibility to take care of the water that flows through our watershed."

The Mill Creek watershed extends from Campton Hills through Blackberry Township in the Mill Creek subdivision to Geneva and Batavia.

Mill Creek goes into the Fox River, which goes into the Illinois River, and then to the Mississippi River, where it then goes to what is known as the "hypoxia zone" in the Gulf of Mexico, Soliz said.

The hypoxia or dead zone is caused largely by nutrient pollution from human activities – among other factors – that deplete the oxygen required to support marine life in bottom and near-bottom water, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website, www.noaa.gov.

Soliz said she works for Applied Ecological Services, a company that does watershed planning.

"But this watershed," Soliz said, "is my watershed."

Mill Creek is considered impaired by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's water quality standards. The planning agency received a \$248,000 federal Clean Water Act grant to develop a watershed plan, work with partners, and assist with implementation when the plan is complete, documents show.

Samantha Malusky of Geneva said she came to the open house to understand the process and the governmental entities that are involved with the watershed.

"I'm here to see if my neighborhood – or anybody else who's interested – could get involved and kind of implement some of these more progressive things that are done out there to clean the watershed and have them implement it here," Malusky said. "Where would I even start? Who would I talk to? And so I'm here to learn that and provide some general feedback."

Trish Beckjord of St. Charles, program manager for the Fox River Initiative Program of the Conservation Foundation, said she came to get public opinion.

"I think it's important for people who live within the watershed to see what the committee is thinking about and all of the considerations that go into the creation of an updated master plan for Mill Creek," Beckjord said. "They need to think about what they are doing in their own property, what they value in the land around them, and what is important to them to keep Mill Creek a valuable natural resource."

Beckjord said homeowners' individual practices in their yards affect the watershed through runoff.

"If you are adding a lot of fertilizers and pesticides in your lawn care, how that can run off into the creek, which then ends up down in the Fox River and then it degrades both Mill Creek and ultimately the Fox River," Beckjord said.

The next step in the planning process, Holly Hudson of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning said, is stakeholder interviews.

Hudson said stakeholder interviews can be done by organizations or groups, such as homeowners associations, natural resource committees and civic clubs, that invite the planning agency to a meeting by calling her at 312-386-8700 or via email at hudson@cmap.illinois.gov.